

An Ironical View of the Question; or, "How to Give Our Boys an Education." The question which gives a title to this paper is one which seems to be of special interest to all who, directly or indirectly, are concerned with the youth of the present day. Scores of people have rushed headlong into print to answer it, but all have signal failed. Notwithstanding this, the present writer, undeterred by the misfortunes of others, will try, in the following lines, to point out a solution to the problem, and so relieve many anxious minds from the load of care which has oppressed them.

In the first place it must be clearly understood that no boy should enter a really good school under the age of fourteen. The reasons for this are obvious. If a pupil comes into a school as a child, he will probably very soon be ready to pass on into the higher classes, which means expense. Again, he may become attached to his school, and even be sorry to leave it when the day comes for him to go out into the world. For these reasons, therefore, and others that I might mention, the boy should enter school about the age of fourteen. He will, of course, leave at the end of the year, to go to business, and this will be ample time for his masters to equip him thoroughly for the battle of life which he will soon have to face.

Previous to being settled at a first-class school, the more schools of the other class he attends the better, so that they do not attempt to teach him the rudimentary subjects, but confine themselves to those more purely ornamental, such as painting and music. If they should teach him the rudiments, let it always be on the plan of discontinuing the teaching and practice of one subject as soon as another is taken up. This forgetting one thing as soon as another is learned saves the pupil (but not his master) from that terrible strain on the mind which causes such distress and suffering in so many cases.

When a boy is finally settled at school, great pains must be taken not to interfere with the work of the master in whose class he is placed. As a matter of principle, a guardian should be in absolute ignorance of what his ward is doing at school. Of course he should see that the boy is well furnished with books. And here another word of caution is necessary. Never let a parent or guardian be led away by the popular clamor for new books. Why should our boys have new books? What about the books we used ourselves at school? Our fathers used them before us, their fathers before them. Are they to be thrown on one side as useless, and are we to put to the trouble and expense of purchasing others in their place? Perish the thought! Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Are not Walkingham's Arithmetic, and Cobbett's Grammar, and Anderson's Geography better than all the new books that were ever purchased? Where can we find a book at once so interesting and so accurate as Little Arthur's History? What modern Latin Grammar can compare with Lilley's Manual? Milton learned from it. Why should our boys prefer another? Boys are considered far too much nowadays.

It will be necessary to check one bad habit in which all schoolboys indulge to a greater or less extent; I mean the habit of punctuality. I admit it is not an easy matter to suppress this, but by patient effort much may be done. The wisest plan, if a boy persists in rising early, is, never to have his breakfast ready in time. But in spite of every effort it may sometimes happen that a boy is early at school two or three times in succession. To counteract the baneful effects of this, let him be at home a day or two. By so doing two persons will be made happy; first, the boy, and second, his teacher.

Just a closing word about Home Lessons. If possible these should be absolutely prohibited. But I must confess that the subject presents many difficulties. Teachers have proverbially "an easy time," and there is no doubt to abolish the lessons would be to benefit the teacher. So it will be advisable here to proceed with caution. Perhaps the best way is to allow a fixed time for the lessons, say half an hour, and to see that that time is never exceeded. This will give the teacher more to do next morning.

This article is nearly finished. The writer has only made a few suggestions, and there are many points which he has left altogether unnoticed. But if those mentioned are only carefully noted, and duly acted upon, it will be found in a short time that no further care need be taken; and, in the days to come, when the boy, whose well-being has been cared for in the way described above, has become a man, and finds himself, by sheer dint of knowledge, rising higher and higher in the social scale, till at last he attains the proud eminence of a "docker" or a crossing-sweeper, with a heart full of gratitude, he will look back upon his schoolboy-days and thank Providence that over he was enabled to enjoy the blessings and privileges of a good education. Extract from *Oakes Institute Magazine*, Liverpool, England.

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